



Virtual Fisheries Forum 04/05/2022 (National Fishing Month 2022).

Q&A session

Q. What are the key stakeholders doing through preliminary communications to really push the National Fishing Month initiative and engage with non-angling communities about the benefits of angling which may lead to more people being encouraged to join the sport?

A. (Steve) The Agency are launching some social and digital media PR work next week to relay how much fun and opportunity to unwind fishing provides along with subsequent links to information about events where people can try angling.

A. (James) Engaging with non-anglers and encouraging them to give fishing a first try is a tricky task but the key thing that works in our favour is that the actual act of fishing is a great product. People only need to attend an event once and they get hooked! The imagery surrounding the advertising of NFM is very much targeted/marketed towards family audiences as young adults and children are the sports prospective future. We want NFM events to be the spark that sets these families on a lifelong journey with angling.

A. (Alex) What Kind of role do angling figures/role models have within doing what you both describe?

A. (Andrew) If you survey people who have no connection with angling, they would likely say fishing doesn't appeal to them and they certainly wouldn't think about fishing going about their day to day lives which is where it is important we get into their sphere of consciousness which we aim to do various ways. Firstly, using media/publication outlets which are used in angling but not exclusively for angling enabling our message to be within more general public aimed content. Secondly, we can connect with associated and other outdoor industries like camping for shared mutual exposure and also reconnecting with other country

sports like game shooting by having angling presence at game fairs like there once was. We are pushing awareness to outdoor retailers about sales potential of fishing tackle so that more retailers choose to stock/display it increasing public access/exposure. There is further potential to go into schools where pilot schemes have shown schools to be keen on taking up opportunities for supervised angling. Coming back to angling celebrities, it is more about trying to generate the non-angling connections with the sport using the angling celebrities who are appropriate wherever we can to assist this such as Mortimer and Whitehouse where they are known publicly for things other than fishing attracting audiences from non-angling groups with their status who are then engaged directly with angling by watching the pair angling. Getting to the juniors is harder in this respect because older people will be able to relate and be engaged more to general public celebrities like Mortimer and Whitehouse than younger generations. Getting down the line to younger people is more possible through those with digital platforms and profiles.

A. (James) My colleague was recently involved with an event down at Anglers Paradise in Devon where Hassan Kahn from Nash was there (a notable public figure in angling) and it was clear the event had engaged with non-anglers because nobody knew who he was which goes to support Andrew's point.

A. (Steve) In the near future the Agency will be releasing some video content where we have worked with Jimmy Bullard (ex-premier league footballer) and his personality/enthusiasm for fishing which we have captured will resonate with non-anglers just how much fun the sport is. Finding those people is not easy but when you do and facilitate the

Q. Are there any specific things (no matter how out of the box) you can recommend to clubs organising events to help keep people fishing that we might not have thought of? I love the idea of the drop-in sessions for example. (To baseline what we're doing already: we are planning another round of Get Fishing events and run a competition for participants towards the end of the summer)?

A. (James) It is difficult to have a one size fits all situation because every angling club/fishery will be different in terms of size, resources, location etc. Listening to what participants want as well is key because some participants may have greater experience than others and helping them

where they need it works best than a blanket coaching strategy which assumes everyone is novices.

A. (Andrew) Sometimes it is a case of thinking outside the box. In the past within a sport unrelated to fishing I have seen initiatives where working with other clubs to engage youngsters from one club with those from another club encourages a more social connection to the activity and new stimulus rather than just doing the sport alone under the same circumstances, this helps keep younger people engaged/involved as they develop. In a fishing context this could be venue exchanges to allow youngsters to try fishing new waters away from familiar surroundings or shared multi club junior fishing session meet ups for example. Another strategy is to work with retailers and brands who could supply free tackle items to give to juniors after the events related to what they have been taught so there is more incentive to get back out fishing independently after the initial session and put taught skills into practice. There are certainly brands within the Angling Trade Association who would be willing to support such initiatives.

A. (Steve) One thing I would always try to avoid at taster events is having people stood around doing nothing because attention spans will be minimal. Even fishing related activities on land like casting games and such to pass the time between fishing slots.

Q. Is there a target number of total non-fishers you aim to get attending an event during the month? If so, are there regional breakdowns? I would like to present holding an event at my Association's next committee meeting and feel that setting a target of attendees might gain more buy-in than a general 'let's get as many as we can' attitude.

A. (James) This depends slightly on the number of volunteers a club has at its disposal. I would also focus on giving the attendees a really good angling experience rather than trying to get as many people through as possible. As a rough guide, a club volunteer per family is usually a good guide. If you can get together 5 volunteers, it means you will be comfortably be able to work with 5 families (of 4) and engage 20 people at your event. If you reach out to your local development officer, they will be able to advise, assist and also direct you to AT guidance models of how to run events. Angling Trust participation team contact details are [AVAILABLE HERE](#).

A. (Andrew) As well as providing a quality experience at the coaching event it is key also to provide the framework novices need to be able to enter a tackle shop and know roughly what they need and why for entry level forms of angling. We want to minimise all the likely pitfalls which can off-put people from having the confidence to try fishing independently.

Q. Are there any press releases we could use to beef up any approach we might make to our local newspaper?

A. (James) Yep, we will create templates that people just drop their details into about the event they want to host in a similar way to how some of the posters we have established. Easy templates there for people to use which they can circulate to their local newspapers and other means of reaching non-angling communities.

Q. Comment not a question related the discussion. To get to non-anglers, post events on local Facebook groups... parents are CRYING OUT for things for kids to do outside, especially in the summer holidays.

A. (Alex) Absolutely, these community style Facebook groups are a great opportunity to reach non-anglers which is yet to be properly explored to its full potential.

Q. Do any of the panellists have a view as to why the younger generation are not taking up fishing, I understand the 'there are many more draws on free time', but I wonder if the inability to just turn up on the bank and get a ticket without first joining a club or minimum age without an adult are impacting that? I am an older angler and started out cycling to or taking the bus to a local canal in my early teens and caught the bug! it just seems more difficult to get that initial access and light the spark?

A. (James) The amount of freedom young people have compared to decades ago is much less I think which impacts angling participation. That is a societal change with it being less socially acceptable for children and teenagers to be unsupervised. The accessibility of angling as you say is not as straight forward as other sports due to the need for licenses, equipment, transport etc but all we can do is really market the sport well and ensure it is significant enough to be at the forefront of people's minds when looking for activities to do, particularly during school holidays. The positive news is that when events and activities giving

young people and families the chance to try fishing, they are always popular.

A. (Andrew) I agree with the above, also from what I have seen working in the angling trade the passing down of fishing from older generations to younger has reduced in scale along with the participation amongst adults in general. The reduction of working industry in the UK has definitely had an impact where workplaces used to have organised angling club networks. Having role models within angling is important for young people to want to get involved with the sport and as a base of reference/knowledge to do so. The more onerous nature of angling legalities nowadays with landowners and fishing rights etc is a challenge but schemes like "Take a Friend Fishing" will make this as easy as possible.

Q. When I was a kid the rivers and lakes around West London were full of fish. They are now almost all barren of small starter type fish. 2 years ago we did a fishing is fun day in Hillingdon and only 2 small perch were caught on Little Britain lake. With 300 plus trying angling over the two days. How can you get people excited in fishing where there are no fish to be caught? The large number of volunteers ended up scratching about on the river for odd minnows and small stuff.

A. (Steve) It is always good to discuss matters like this with your local EA officers if there is a concern over fish stocks. One issue which may be relevant here is that river water has generally become clearer, and this has impacts on fish behaviour making them more wary of feeding during daylight making angling during sociable hours trickier.

A. (Andrew) I think angling over the years has had an effect on fisheries because trends in angling create specific demands for fisheries to accommodate/develop for which may not necessarily be as novice/beginner friendly.

Q. Has the Angling Trust considered appointing a school's officer. Somebody that would visit encourage /educate pupils about fishing and then liaise with local clubs. This would be a twofold benefit, new kids on the block and AT would get a good feel for local clubs and commitment?

A. (James) We have just started a pilot project in partnership with Shakespeare which is a schools-based project involving 2 AT staff

working directly in schools. The project is in its very early stages but one of the outcomes of the project will be to generate more interest in angling and direct young people to local events and activities where they can get into fishing.

Q. I see that the national fishing month.com expects to go live 1st July, is this early enough to allow families to plan attendance, many I am sure many will already be planning how they cover entertaining the kids during Aug. I recall some of the emails etc last summer not arriving in my mailbox until a week or so before the event, whilst I shared those on our angling club social media for most it was too late or fully subscribed so unable to participate?

A. (James) This is a new process for us. This timeline replicates similar initiatives such as The Wildlife Trusts “30 days wild” initiative which runs through June and that launched today. We will review the process to ensure that the best approach is taken each year to give us the biggest opportunity to get as many people involved as possible.

Key contacts from this forum meeting:

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- Andrew Race (Chairman of the Angling Trades Association)

